

WATER/WASTEWATER FACILITIES COMMISSION
COMMISSION MINUTES
December 10, 2014

A meeting of the City of Fitchburg Water / Wastewater Commission was held on December 10, 2014 at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting commenced at 4:35 p.m.

Members present: Lenny Laakso, Commissioner DPW
Rick Healey
Carol Brown
Michael McLaughlin

Members Absent: George Siener
Ron Lubianez

Others present: Denis Meunier, Deputy Commissioner Water
Jeff Murawski, Deputy Commissioner Wastewater
Mary Jane Franklin

ITEM # 1: Approval of last meetings minutes:

The minutes for the October 8, 2014 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

ITEM # 2: Public Forum:

689 Franklin Rd Sewer Connection:

Mr. Murawski explained, that during a real estate closing for a different property, it was discovered that 689 Franklin Rd had been tied into the sewer system several years ago. Apparently, there was a lengthy delay between the sewer lateral being installed and occupancy of this building and as a result, an oversight occurred and the property hadn't been billed for sewer service. In an effort to correct this, Mr. Murawski began to investigate past record files and practices from previous similar situations. He discovered an interpretation from the City Solicitors Office that the charges could only be billed for the previous three years. Mr. Murawski decided it would be reasonable to begin billing at the start of monthly billing nearly three years ago. A discussion regarding the appropriate way to bill this property was held.

ITEM # 3: Update on Rate Study:

Mr. Meunier explained he expected the rate study to move forward more rapidly than it has to date, as there is an in place, on call engineering contract with both Weston & Sampson and Tighe and Bond. After receiving a proposal from Tighe and Bond there had been delay in the notice to proceed due to a purchasing issue. There are also some questions about whether the software used for the Water/Sewer billing will be capable of collecting the data Tighe and Bond are requesting. The notice to proceed was issued approximately a week ago and Tighe and Bond will start the analysis of the rate study.

ITEM # 4: Update the Commission on the status of Wastewater projects:

Combined Sewer Separation:

Mr. Murawski presented the commission with excerpted contract drawings and a google earth regarding the ongoing Sewer Separation Project (CSS-4D) on Boutelle St as a visual aide.

There is approximately 1,000 feet of both sewer and drain installation remaining in this project. The drain installation will end at Prescott St and the sewer installation will continue northerly to a tie in on Lunenburg St.

He explained when the last “look ahead” was provided by the contractor, they were planning on initiating sewer replacement (not separation) work on John Fitch Highway. They instead will be focusing solely on the mandated separation work and will allocate the construction crew that would have been working on John Fitch to Boutelle in order complete the project before the end of the construction season.

There is a provision written into the contract defining work hours, which are conventional Monday thru Friday work hours and the contractor has requested to work this Saturday. A discussion was held about how this could impact the residents along with when the third crew should work and how to notify and reroute traffic.

Secondary Systems Upgrades:

Mr. Murawski informed the Commission there was a meeting for the FEMA/LOMAR effort regarding the 100 year flood and its impact to the treatment facility’s upgrade design. Attending this meeting, in addition to Fitchburg Wastewater, were representatives from Leominster, Wright Pierce and Whitman & Bingham. The goal is to perform a cross section survey work for the North Nashua River. Next week a peer review meeting of Wright Pierce’s engineering design will take place. This was requested by DEP and will have Tighe and Bond as the reviewer.

There have been seven proposals received previously for OPM services associated with the SSU project. The mayor appointed a committee to review the proposals and they screened the seven proposals to three firms, CDM, Tighe and Bond and Weston and Sampson. Interview dates have been scheduled for next week.

Supplemental Environmental Project:

Mr. Murawski reported the Conservation and Parks Commissions have both approved the bank stabilization project for Falulah Brook at Coolidge Park. The goal is to have the project out to bid in late January or early February, award a construction contract in March and initiate construction in the summer months.

ITEM # 5: Follow up Discussion with the Commission on the matter of Paper Mills Billing:

Mr. Murawski explained to the Commission that he discovered an information resource through Georgia Tech, called the Center for Paper Business and Industry Studies and requested information about paper pulp and paper mill businesses in Massachusetts. Through this resource he hoped to learn how mills are billed for their sewer service in other communities.

The other communities with Paper Mills have a variety of ways of billing (complicated formulas similar to Fitchburg's, residential rates, industrial rates, flat rates, etc.) and there appears to be no "standard" formula.

Mr. Murawski reminded the Commission that flow elements and water quality attributes pertaining to BOD and TSS were factored into the billing system and arranged around the operation of the West Plant. As the West Plant is no longer in operation, he would like to see a more relevant billing system used.

Mr. Meunier reported that a meeting was held with the Mayor to discuss the Paper Mills Billing and ways to approach the negotiations.

ITEM #6: General Wastewater Business Updates:

Anaerobic Digestion:

Mr. Murawski reported grant money from MassCEC was received to determine the feasibility of siting an anaerobic digestion facility at the West Plant. There have been some delays in information of secondary source organics, however, the consultants, Weston and Sampson uncovered a British company, purchased by GE who specialize in this type of work. A tour of the plant with the British company has been scheduled. Mr. Murawski is encouraged that the information provided by this company will lead to a more usable and reliable feasibility study.

Safety Trainings:

An electrical safety training has been scheduled with a former Monty Tech instructor who will also assist in a lockout/tag out program.

There has been a combined effort of DPW, Wastewater and Water to develop a confined space entry program.

Personnel:

The electrician currently on staff will be retiring and Mr. Murawski will be advertising for a replacement of this position.

Permits:

Mr. Murawski anticipates receiving a draft permit application for the renewal of the East Plant's NPDES permit. He would like this submitted for renewal by early February 2015.

ITEM # 11: Other Business:

Mr. Meunier explained the 5 ½" – 6" rainstorm the area received changed the chemistry of the reservoir water. The Falulah Plant could not produce the quality of water needed to go in the system and was shut down the first week of November. The Regional Plant in Westminster is capable of supplying water to all of Fitchburg so that Plant was used. After three weeks of engineering firms and chemical vendors finding no solutions, the chemistry is correct and the Plant is now running. He felt it was concerning as it is not clear what specifically changed. There will be ongoing research as to what happened.

Mr. Laakso reported that per the City Clerk, the ethics test must be taken by every Commission member.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2014 at 4:30 pm at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM

Minutes Prepared by _____
Mary Jane Franklin